

1 Verda Bergstrom

Tape 247

Interviewed: 4 April 1988

Transcribed by Kathleen Irving, March 2001

[Questions marks in parentheses denote comments or words that were unintelligible. The interviewer, one of Verda Bergstrom's grandchildren, is not identified by name. Other people mentioned are generally identified by first name only.]

Verda Bergstrom (Verda): What would you like me to say?

Child: Where were you born at? How many brothers and sisters?

Verda: I was born in Manila, Utah, in 1924, November 11. I was the fourth child in the family. Vena was first, Bernard, and Earl, and then me. And then we moved to moved to Vernal in 1928, I guess, and then Marna and Clifford and Wanda and Lynn were born in Vernal.

Child: Up near Manila there was a town named Linwood. Do you remember that?

Verda: Yes. Yes I do.

Child: Do you remember going up with your father?

Verda: Yes, many times. Two or three times to the store.

Child: What was it?

Verda: A log building. It wasn't very big. He bought me two glass marbles there one time. I kept them until I left them back in Minnesota with my stuff. I didn't get them when my stuff was shipped out. Somebody had broken into the garage and taken a bunch of stuff and those marbles were in my trunk, so I didn't get them back. I remember that old Linwood store.

Child: Did you go by horse and buggy or just on horse?

Verda: By wagon. My dad never owned a buggy. Incidentally, I can only remember once ever seeing him in a buggy and that was to get the horse to go up the road out of the red wash up there. It got in a place that was a bog and so he got in a buggy and took a whip. When we started up the other side and horse stopped, backed up, he hit it with that row and away we went. That was the only time I ever remember him being in a buggy. He always drove the wagon.

Child: What kind of an occupation did Grandpa Moore have?

Verda: He was a farmer.

Child: What else did he do, I mean? Blacksmith?

Verda: Well, he had all kinds of things. He did everything. He could build things as a carpenter. He was a blacksmith; he was an animal doctor. If somebody had a sick cow, he took care of their animals. He worked hard from daylight 'til dark all the time.

Child: My dad told a story about one time he was patting down a horse and there was a cougar that kind of skimmed the horse's back or whatever and he had to kill the cougar and take the cougar leather and stitch up the horse again. Did he ever tell you that story?

Verda: No, not that I recall. When my dad was young, he was a cowboy out on the range over on Blue Mountain. He worked at a ranch, Daniels, I guess it was called. They had a racetrack with race horses. Besides all the other ranching things they had, they had race horses. When Earl got his first car, which was 1938, my dad and Bernard and Earl and me went for a ride one day. We went down there and looked at that ranch across Green River. And that's where he lived when him and my mother was married.

Child: Do you know if it's still around, the ranch?

Verda: Well, the ranch is still there, but it could be sold and parceled out. But you could still see the racetrack because it had (?) by the (?). We weren't on the ranch because you had to cross the river at Jensen and go up the other side. We didn't go to it, we just looked down from that hill and could see it.

Child: Do you remember going to school?

Verda: Yeah.

Child: Did you go to school in Manila or just in Vernal?

Verda: No. I was only four years old when we moved to Vernal. I started in Ashley School when I was... I must have been five because I was a year younger than most of the kids I went to school with. So I started when I was five years old in first grade. I turned six in November.

We drove a horse and buggy, you know, Vena and Bernard and Earl and I. I think probably even Marna started there. I'm not sure. Before they got a school bus, we had to walk clear down there by where the Steinaker Dam is. That's where we had to walk to to get on the school bus. I think now that was probably halfway to school. Sometimes, in nice weather we used to even walk. I can remember walking home from school a lot of times. I went there through the fifth grade and then they closed that school and we all had to go to Central School. So, I went there from the sixth grade on.

Child: Were your grandparents living in Vernal at the time you moved down there?

Verda: Well, my Grandma Weltha H. (?) Gibson was there, but my other two, from the Moore side, were dead. My grandma died in 1923 or 1927, anyway it was before we moved back from

Manila to Vernal. I was little enough. She had seen me, but I don't ever remember seeing her. I think this picture you have of me as a baby, that crib, would have been the last time I saw her. I was very small.

My earliest memory that I have is being up on my dad's lap, on my knees on his lap, with my arms around neck, and him rocking in that old rocking chair and singing "Two Little Girls in Blue".

Child: Do you remember the words to it?

Verda: Oh, it's a long song.

Child: Sing one or two verses.

Verda: It started out: An old man gazed at a (?) His nephew then asked him his (?) that had cost him dear. Come listen, my lad, and I'll tell to you a story that's strange, but true. Her father and I at the school one day met two little girls in blue. Two little girls in blue, mate, two little girls in blue. They were sisters and we were brothers and we learned to love the two. Then one little girl in blue won your father's heart. To gain your mother, now married the other, but (?) we drift apart.

That's it.

Child: I was listening to the words that you remember. You said once that you remember Grandpa Moore working all the time.

Verda: He did.

Child: Do you ever remember working beside him, and what you did?

Verda: I didn't work with him 'cause he didn't believe in women working outside. But, when I was little, before I started to school, I'd go meet him when he was coming up the road. I'd go meet him when he was hauling hay and he'd take the horses out to the ditch for a drink and he'd lift me up on Old Pat and I'd ride him back to the stable. All the time. I'd go to meet him in the hay wagon when he was doing a lot of things and there was a pole sticking out the back, and he'd let me ride that like it was a horse, holding to the back of the hay wagon. But I always went. I loved to go with him.

My mother'd go with him and ride into town and it always amazed me when we went because everybody knew him and they'd say, "Hello, Bill!" We went into Newton Brothers Saddle Company one time. It was a leather place, a shoe-making place. They sold saddles and bridles and whatnot. The proprietor was blind. He was setting clear back to the back and when we walked in that front door, he said, "Hello, Bill. How are you?" He could tell by his step who it was.

He was really pleasant always and he always hummed wherever he went, you could hear him humming. And there used to be a Mrs. Harper over to Manila that my mother said said, "You could always tell when Bill Moore's coming down the road because you can hear him singing before you can see him." He'd just hum to himself. Never sang the words too much, but just hummed to keep himself company.

Child: Did the family do very much singing as a family?

Verda: Yeah, we all did. My mother had this old guitar that my dad had bought her when they were first married. He paid for it with a ten-dollar gold piece, which I don't know what it looked like. But we had that. It was broken because on one of the grooves—it had been laying on a load of hay or something and my dad had not known it was there and put his knee to it. So, it was broken and hanging on the wall for many, many years. One time my mother's brother-in-law, who was Ty Campbell, fixed it, put a new piece in there, and glued it in, from the top of a cigar box. He smoothed it out and cut it like this and put it in there. It always rattled, but it was a good guitar. It was easy to play. So, I learned to play the guitar, Earl learned to play the guitar. I think all the kids learned, but some of them didn't do too much with it. Earl and I both liked to do it and Verdaena didn't do it too much until after she got married, then I think she got her own guitar and taught herself to do something with it. But eventually, Lynn did, then started playing, too, after he'd got grown a little bit. It was after I left home, so I don't how much he did.

I came to Salt Lake for the first time in 1939 and stayed with Uncle Lewis and Aunt Flora. And then at Christmas time I went home and they had bought that ranch down on the Owens' place down in Randlett. My dad was down there because he had to be to build a house, because it had partially burned before. They were going to move, but they hadn't moved yet, and when I got home I said, "Well, let's go. We've got to be together for Christmas." Everybody loaded up the stuff in the truck and they moved. Until that time my dad had been down there alone and my mother had been up in Vernal alone, with the kids, of course.

But even after my father was buried that day, before we all had to leave to come back and go separate ways again, we sang at that house and it was just like my dad was in the bedroom asleep, because he always went to bed early and he didn't mind that we sat up and sang, chattered, you know, just talked and laughed. I don't know what anybody would have thought if they'd come knowing that we had just buried our father and still we'd been singing. But it was like he was there anyway. It wasn't sacrilegious or disrespectful or anything else.

Woman: It was recalling memories.

Verda: Yeah. Well, it was just like always. He was *there*. And there was no feeling we shouldn't be doing it. We had a good time. The next day we all left and came home.

Child: Why was it that you came to Salt Lake to live with Uncle Lewis?

Verda: Oh, I had a heart condition when I was young and the doctor told my mother to send me to a lower climate, so it wouldn't be so hard on my heart. And Salt Lake is a thousand feet lower than Vernal, so he said that might help. So, that's what we did. Earl paid my board and room at Aunt Nora's. It was a \$10 contract in those days. I stayed from September until December—three months.

Child: How did you get to go to Minnesota and meet your husband?

Verda: I didn't go to Minnesota to meet him. He lived out here. He came to Salt Lake. His mother and sister had moved out here and he came to see what they liked about it and stayed

here for the rest of his life. More or less. He traveled a lot, but they moved to Salt Lake to be close to the church and went to the temple, my sister-in-law.

Child: Who was that?

Verda: Tirzah Bergstrom. She was in her thirties.

Child: How do you spell her name?

Verda: T-I-R-Z-A-H.

Child: Where did the name originate from?

Verda: In the Bible. Somebody's wife in the Bible. I've seen it; I don't know just whose it was.

Child: But you said you had a trunk that was...

Verda: Yeah. In 1949 we moved back to Minnesota. He had always told me there was no place like Minnesota and so we went back to see, and sure enough, there wasn't.

Child: And you don't want to go back, huh?

Verda: No. Well, I went back once, twenty-one years later to see my relatives and put some flowers on my mother-in-law's grave. We moved everything we had back there, then I came home. He and I separated and I came home and left the stuff stored. That's when my Dad first got sick. He had his first heart attack and he was afraid he wouldn't ever see me again and my mother wrote and told me and I felt so bad, we decided that instead of paying rent on that apartment, I'd take the money and come home. And that's what I did. Then I just stayed here after.

My dad was not a church-goer really, but he was honest, and he taught his kids, every one of them, to be honest, to work for what you get and not have your hand out for something, to have to ask for charity. It was during the Depression when there was no money anywhere. He had to work for WPA to get the money to feed his kids and to live. It was the hardest thing he ever had to go through. It was terrible.

I remember a lot of times when they needed... When they built the Seminary building in Vernal, they asked if he had anything and he didn't have any money, he never had any money, but he donated a big load of hay, that was over a ton of hay. I don't know what they did with it, but they sold it, I suppose. I don't know how much it was worth or anything else. He did that all on his own with no help, he just loaded it up and took it. He was always there if somebody needed something. He would always help. It didn't matter.

I've seen him unhook the hay mower, or hay rake, or whatever he was doing. If somebody had a sick cow or something that needed to be done, neighbors would come and say, "Bill, I've got a sick cow." He'd lay the mower down. He always did that.

Child: Was he like the town veterinarian in a way?

Verda: Well, kind of. Not for the whole town, but for that area there out in Ashley. People knew that he could do it and they come and ask him. He never hesitated.

Child: Where did he get his knowledge? Around the racetrack area?

Verda: No, because he knew about cows, too. But he was just handy with animals and understood. He had a veterinary book. If he didn't know what to do, he'd look it up in the veterinary book. I don't know what happened to it. I guess that went the way of the good books we had.

I had a little book that he gave me when I was young, when I'd learned to read. It was two stories in one book. It was just a small-sized book. "Aunt Grace's Trust" was the second one and "Casper the Barber" was the first one. I just loved it. I let my son take it to school for show-and-tell and he never brought it back. I also had his Cribbers (?) spelling book from when he was in school. They had to buy their own books. This was spelling words in this book with his handwriting in the front that said "Willy Moore," because he used to be called Willy. He was always Will to the family. All his brothers and sisters called him Will; his mother called him Will.

Child: How come everyone else called him Bill?

Verda: Well, Bill is a proper name for Will. His name was William and people just call you what they want to. But instead of saying William, they called him Will. That was kind of old-fashioned. That was before Billy was fashionable.

I don't have any pictures of him at all in that volume. So you can't see what he looked like. There's only one with his father and mother. That's the only one I remember ever seeing.

Child: Do you remember the story you told me about when Aunt Wanda was a dating Uncle Ralph and Grandpa Moore had just had a stroke or something and he was bedridden. Do you remember the details?

Verda: When I went out there to see him? And I stayed with them while Wanda and Ralph went to the show?

He'd kicked the covers down like he was a little baby and you just had to cover him up. And he'd kick the covers down like a baby and I went in there and the covers was off again and I said, "You'd better watch it or I'm gonna tell Wanda on you." And he just smiled and let me cover him up. But she had a way with him that was kind of gruff. Just like I said, "Watch out or I'm going to tell Wanda," you know. But she could take care of him a lot better than my mother could because somehow they got along better. My mother felt so sorry for him, I think, that she treated him like a baby and he didn't want to be treated like a baby. But Wanda was gruff with him and that's what he needed.

Child: Do you remember when your brothers went off to the service?

Verda: Well, I was growed up, too, and away from home. I remember when Bernard went. I wasn't married yet. Well, I wasn't married when Earl went either, but I was living in Salt Lake. We knew Bernard was going to go, but at Christmas I paid his way out here so he could come

out and spend Christmas with me in Salt Lake. It was kind of foolish, I guess, but we just had to have something to kind of hang on to while he was gone.

Child: Was he in the service before World War II?

Verda: No, it was during it. It had started in December of 1941 and this was about January of 1942 before he left. I'm not sure whether it was '42 or '43. I don't remember now. It was right close around there.

Child: And then Earl?

Verda: Then Earl went in, let's see, in 1944. In February I went to Fort Douglas to see Earl because he was up there. When they drafted the guys, they'd have to go to the Induction Center, as they called it. So he called me and I said, "I'll come up and see you." So I went up to see him and I was supposed to meet him at the canteen up where I thought it was, Service Club or something, I can't remember what it was called. I went there and it took me four hours to decide he wasn't coming and I got home and I called him and he had been at a different canteen that I didn't know was there. There was four of them on the post and I didn't know it. I'd been to the one with my boyfriend, so I thought that was the only one there was. But that was in February of about '44. Then he left. He was on his way, I think, to Japan. He had had his training and went on to Japan then.

Child: Then my dad got drafted for the Korean War, is that right?

Verda: I don't know whether he was drafted or whether.... I don't really know because that was after I was married and had four kids, so I wasn't there. But I remember when he came back from Ft. Lewis after he'd been discharged.

Child: Ft. Lewis, where's that?

Verda: Washington.

Child: Washington state or...?

Verda: Up by Tacoma. I think he said he'd been in the army something like 105 days and ninety-some days he spent in the hospital. He got arthritis and they had to cut his boot off. Then they put him in the hospital and he got pneumonia. He was in there for the arthritis, they were trying to find out what it was, I guess, and then he got pneumonia and they give him all these drugs and he was allergic to all the drugs they gave him. So then he had to stay until they decided what it was that he couldn't take. When he came home, he had patches all across his back in little squares, like this, where they had taken skin off to test. Katie was a baby, between one and two, I think, when he came back.

Child: What do you remember about Grandma?

Verda: I don't remember a thing about her. Do you mean *my* mother?

Child: Yeah.

Verda: Oh, I remember lots of things about her. (Laughter) She was happy, usually. She liked to sing. She had a beautiful, strong alto voice. She taught me how to play the guitar. She was the music in the family. She was also very strong-willed. She wanted her own way. That's where we all learned some of that. But we used to have good times, laughed and carried on. She made the best sugar cookies in the whole world.

Child: What was her favorite song, do you remember that?

Verda: I don't know. We used to sing "Whispering Hope" all the time, so I wonder if that was her favorite or not. I don't know. I really don't remember, but that was one of them. And she harmonized. She could harmonize with anything, any song that she could hear, she could pick out the harmony for it. The first time I saw her sit down at an organ, I almost died, because I didn't know she could play, but she could.

Child: Do you remember the circumstances behind her going to the temple? And trying to find her membership?

Verda: Well, she never could find her baptism. It was lost someplace in the shuffle while she was growing up. She never had a certificate, and the church had no record of her being baptized. But she knew she was. So I don't know how that was ever resolved, but she went to the temple in 1954. But I don't know how that was resolved, and she was very strong against she wasn't going to be baptized again because she knew she had been baptized once and she wouldn't be baptized again, so I don't know how they resolved it. I don't know. I wasn't there.

Child: Did you go through the temple with her?

Verda: No, I couldn't go right then, but I was sealed to them when Bernard and Iola (?) went and had their family sealed to them, before Gail was born. Bernard and I were sealed at that time. Marna was later and Vena was later, I think.

Child: When did Earl, not Earl, but Lynn go?

Verda: Lynn went when she went that first time in 1954. He went with her and they were sealed.

(Unintelligible comment about a grandbaby.)

Child: Do you remember very much about trips or things you liked to do when you were with your family?

Verda: I don't think my mother and father ever went any place together and left us alone. It was always one person stayed there with us. Usually my mother would go somewhere in the buggy and my dad had his wagon and horses and saddle horses, but we never took a trip together. We never had a vacation. Even to go to town together, they didn't. I was thirteen years old before I

ever saw a movie. That's why I learned to play the guitar and sing because there wasn't any other noise around there. We didn't have a radio in our house until after Ray (?) was born.

Child: Did your father ever talk about his mother and father? What they did?

Verda: Yeah, not too much. He remembered the details of his father's death.

Child: Was it suicide?

Verda: Yeah. He must have planned it because the ? drug him. [There are some unintelligible comments here.] But he never knew why, nobody ever knew why and it really was tough for all of them all their life.

End of tape.